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**ORGANIZER OF MODOC COUNTY'S LARGEST MARIJUANA GARDEN
SENTENCED TO OVER 15 YEARS IMPRISONMENT**

SACRAMENTO--United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced today that United States District Judge Frank C. Damrell, Jr. sentenced defendant Esequiel Quesada Garcia, age 48, of Alturas, California, to a combined total 181 months imprisonment based on his convictions after a jury trial on March 22, 2004 for conspiracy to manufacture marijuana plants, manufacturing of marijuana plants, and possession of a firearm in furtherance of drug trafficking crimes. Garcia's convictions stem from a 6,481 marijuana plant garden grown in 2002 on both private ranch land, and the Modoc National Forest near Canby, California.

This case was investigated by the Modoc County Interagency Narcotics Task Force; the United States Forest Service; the Modoc County Sheriff's Office; the Alturas Police Department; the Modoc County Probation Office; Sacramento Police Department; the California Highway Patrol; the Bureau of Land Management; and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives for their cooperative efforts in successfully investigating and prosecuting this case.

The 6,481 plant garden is the largest marijuana garden ever discovered in Modoc County. The trial evidence revealed that the marijuana garden site encompassed approximately 3-4 acres in size and took a team of law enforcement officers two days to eradicate. The marijuana garden would have yielded over 6,000 pounds of high grade marijuana bud worth approximately 19-20 million dollars wholesale if sold by the pound. Garcia was a full-time ranch hand at the ranch on which the majority of the marijuana garden was grown. The evidence at trial established that Garcia grew the marijuana without the knowledge of the ranch owner.

In sentencing Garcia, District Judge Damrell noted that: Garcia was an organizer and leader of the marijuana grow operation; Garcia provided supplies and equipment used by the garden workers to grow marijuana; Garcia was responsible for setting up a hidden underground hose system that diverted water from the ranch owner's stock water tank to the marijuana garden; and Garcia lied on the witness stand during the trial. Judge Damrell previously remanded Garcia into custody after the close of the evidence while awaiting the jury's verdicts.

In the same case, Judge Damrell also sentenced defendant Trinidad Sanchez Chacon, age

55, of Alturas, California, to five years imprisonment for his role in the marijuana growing operation. Chacon was convicted after a guilty plea pursuant to a plea bargain of possession of a firearm in furtherance of drug trafficking crimes. The court remanded Chacon immediately into custody after sentencing.

A copy of this news release is available at <http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/cae/home>, select Press Releases.

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